

TELEGRAM

Foreign Service of the
United States of America

INCOMING AMEMBASSY BRASILIA POL-29

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Classification

Control: RIO 3982

Recd: JUN 11, 1970

ACTION

POL

CHRON

RF-2

R 102100Z JUN 70

FM AMEMBASSY RIO DE JANEIRO

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5290

INFO RUESUZ/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 6191

RUESEI/AMCONGEN RECIFE 3373

RUESUP/AMCONGEN SAO PAULO 4950

RULPAL/USCINCSO

BT

~~SECRET~~ RIO DE JANEIRO 3982

CINCSO FOR POLAD

SUBJECT: TRENDS IN GOB POSITION ON TORTURE

Declassified
Authority: 43265 By:
Amanda Weimer Date:
05-15-2015

1. EMB NOTES GOB APPARENTLY ADOPTING SOMEWHAT MORE OPEN POSITION ON TORTURE QUESTION IN RECENT WEEKS. AF DEPT AWARE PUBLIC DISCUSSION THIS QUESTION WAS TABOO IN EARLY MONTHS OF MEDICI REGIME. PUBLIC DEBATE BROKE OUT IN LATE APRIL WHEN GOVERNMENT'S REFUTATION SENATOR KENNEDY'S ALLEGATIONS LED TO PUBLICIZED RESPONSE INCLUDING SOME FAIRLY SPECIFIC CHARGES BY MDB REPRESENTATIVES. THIS DEBATE WAS FOLLOWED IN MAY BY MEDICI'S STATEMENT DENYING TORTURE EXISTS IN BRAZIL. UNDAUNTED BY THIS FLAT DENIAL, SAO PAULO LABOR UNIONS FORMALLY REQUESTED MEDICI INVESTIGATE DEATH IN PRISON OF LABOR ACTIVIST HANSEN. THIS DEVELOPMENT WAS REPORTED IN PRESS, AND MENTIONED IN THE FEDERAL CONGRESS. NEXT CAME BRIEF ANNOUNCEMENT IN ESTADO DO SAO PAULO MAY 27 THAT THREE PAULISTA POLICEMEN WHO HAD ALLEGEDLY TORTURED YOUNG PRISONER TO DEATH WERE TO BE TRIED (VICTIM WAS ROBBERY SUSPECT; WE UNDERSTAND TRIAL HAS JUST BEEN POSTPONED). ON THE SAME DAY BRAZILIAN BISHOPS ISSUED THEIR WIDELY-PUBLICIZED PASTRAL LETTER WHICH INCLUDED A CALL FOR INVESTIGATION OF THE QUESTION OF POLICE BRUTALITIES. ON JUNE 10 ULTIMA HORA REPORTED COURT TESTIMONY OF ACCUSED BANK EMBEZZLER-TERRORIST WHO CLAIMED THAT HIS EARLIER STATEMENT HAD BEEN OBTAINED IN "AN ATMOSPHERE OF BAD TREATMENT AND PHYSICAL AND MENTAL TORTURE." SIMILAR TESTIMONY HAS APPEARED ELSEWHERE IN BRAZIL PRESS ON OTHER OCCASIONS. FINALLY, EMB HAS RECENTLY RECEIVED UNCONFIRMED REPORT (RIO 3902) THAT INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS HAS ALREADY MADE CONTACT HERE WITH MINJUSTICE ON TORTURE QUESTION.

2. PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT ON TORTURE ISSUE HAS THUS BEEN BUILDING UP WITHIN BRAZIL AS WELL AS INTERNATIONALLY. AT SAME TIME, WHILE FORMALLY DENYING EXISTENCE OF POLITICAL IMPRISONEMENT OR TORTURE, GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN TOLERATING INCREASING MENTION OF SUBJECT IN BRAZIL PRESS.

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AS EMBASSY HAS REPORTED (RIO 3739), GOVT HAS ALSO REACTED WITH EQUANIMITY TO BISHOP'S PASTORAL LETTER WITH ITS CALL FOR INVESTIGATION, INDICATING INTEREST IN AVOIDING CONFRONTATION WITH CHURCH ON TORTURE AND RELATED ISSUES.

3. EO50x1 FREQUENCY OF TORTURE HAS DIMINISHED IN RECENT WEEKS, A TREND ATTRIBUTABLE PRINCIPALLY TO REDUCTION IN NUMBER OF ARRESTS OF SUSPECTED SUBVERSIVES. EO50x1 INCREASING CAUTION ON PART OF SECURITY OFFICIALS WITH REGARD TO SUCH ARRESTS SINCE MEDICI'S MAY 8TH STATEMENT DENYING TORTURE'S EXISTENCE. SECURITY OFFICIALS PRESUMABLY ANXIOUS NOT TO BE INVOLVED, PUBLICLY AT LEAST, IN ACTIONS WHICH WOULD PROVE THEIR BOSS WRONG. EO50x1
EO50x1 THEY ARE MORE AWARE NOW OF POLITICAL PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN THESE ARRESTS AND ARE EXERCISING GREATER SELECTIVITY.

4. THIS TREND COULD BE REVERSED ANY TIME IF, FOR EXAMPLE, TERRORIST CAMPAIGN TOOK A NEW TWIST. EMB WILL CONTINUE TO WATCH DEVELOPMENTS AND REPORT ANY FRESH TRENDS.

BOONSTRA

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